Sky Highlights for February

February 2 First quarter moon

February 9 Full Moon. Named the Snow, Hunger or Wolf Moon

February 12 Neptune at conjunction

February 16 Last quarter moon

February 24 New moon

February 25 Dwarf planet Ceres at opposition

Planets Visible This Month

Mercury— Magnitude 0 in the morning sky, but not well placed for viewing.
Venus— At its greatest brightness at magnitude -4.6, Venus dominates the evening sky.
Mars— Barely visible before sunrise at magnitude 1.3
Jupiter— Barely visible before sunrise, near Mars
Saturn— Now rising about 7:30 p.m., it's rings nearly edge-on, at 0.6 magnitude in Leo
Uranus— Magnitude +6 in Aquarius.

**** NOTES:***

Planetary pairings 30 minutes before sunrise:
Feb. 17– Jupiter and Mars 0.5° apart
Feb 21-23 – Mercury, Jupiter and Mars within 10°

Ceres – The largest asteroid, now classified as a dwarf planet, is visible in Leo. On Feb. 25, it will be less than 147 million miles from Earth, the closest since 1857.

Comet Lulin -- Comet C/2007 N3 is expected to reach its closest point to us this month. It's expected to be visible in binoculars in February and March. Its path leads it from Libra through Virgo and into Leo throughout February.

Sky Highlights for March

March 4 First quarter moon
March 8 Saturn at opposition
March 10 Full Moon. Known as the Crow or Sap Moon
March 12 Uranus at conjunction
March 18 Last quarter moon
March 20 Vernal equinox
March 26 New moon
March 27 Venus at inferior conjunction
March 30 Mercury at superior conjunction

Planets Visible This Month

Mercury— Disappears into the sun's glare early in the month
Venus— Brilliant at magnitude -4.6 high in the west as the month begins, Venus drops quickly and is gone by the end of the month. Enjoy it while you can!
Mars— Still low in the east in morning twilight
Jupiter— Still low in the east in morning twilight, above and to the south of Mars
Saturn— in Leo **** see below***

**** NOTES:***

Planetary pairing 30 minutes before sunrise:
March 1– **Mercury** (mag. -0.1) and Mars (mag. +1.2) only 0.7° apart

Saturn -- Although reaching opposition this month, it's a full magnitude fainter than its maximum, because its bright rings are nearly edge-on. This alignment greatly decreases the glare of the rings, making it much easier to observe more of the moons, and study detail on the planet itself.